THE ULTIMATES²

EWING • FOREMAN • BROWN

#100

MARVEL

I AM THE ONE ABOVE ALL.

I SEE THROUGH MANY EYES. I BUILD WITH MANY HANDS.

THEY ARE THEMSELVES, BUT THEY ARE ALSO ME.

I AM ALL-POWERFUL.

MY ONLY WEAPON IS LOVE.

THE MYSTERY INTRIGUES ME.

THE OUTSIDE.

GALACTUS AND THE ETERNITY WATCH.
COSMIC DEFENDERS.

"ETERNITY HAS COLLAPSED--FROM A MULTIVERSE INTO A SINGLE UNIVERSE--

"--AND IS BEING CONSUMED BY OUR ENEMY, ITS DARK ANCESTOR...THE FIRST FIRMAMENT.

"WE WERE FORCED TO EVACUATE--TO THE OUTSIDE OF ALL THINGS--

"--AND NOW THE DARK CELESTIALS OF THE FIRMAMENT HAVE BARRED OUR WAY BACK IN.

"WE WILL NOT LAST LONG, OUT HERE.

"ON THE PRIME EARTH, THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE...FAST REACHING A POINT OF NO RETURN.

"WHILE ON COUNTER-EARTH...

"...THE MAKER AND THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY ACTUALLY THINK THEY ARE SAVING US."

THEY CANNOT FATHOM THAT EVEN DEATH MAY DIE...

...AND ONLY OBLIVION CAN BE VICTOR HERE.

WE HAVE ONE HOPE REMAINING...

MY ALLIES...MY HERALDS...

"...MY ULTIMATES."

COUNTER-EARTH.
THE LABORATORY OF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.

YOU WITH THE HAT!

STEP AWAY FROM THE GIZMO!

COL. CAROL DANVERS.
CODENAME: "CAPTAIN MARVEL."

MONICA RAMBEAU.
CODENAME: "SPECTRUM."

AMERICA CHAVEZ.

DR. ADAM BRASHEAR.
CODENAME: "BLUE MARVEL."

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS EVERYTHING THAT IS AND ALL THAT EVER WAS IN...

GARDEN OF IDEAS

AL EWING
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GALACTUS SENT US. VIA A *REALITY WARP* FROM A *COSMIC GHOST.*

SO YOU *KNOW* THIS IS SERIOUS...

Oh, I'm sure your July 4th-themed street dance is *very* serious. Do you even *understand* this "*gizmo*," young lady?

Because of *me*, Eternity is *free* again--

REED RICHARDS. (ALTERNATE.) ALIAS: "THE MAKER."

OUT OF THE LARDER AND INTO THE SOUP.

WE GOT A *DOWNLOAD* FROM THE *SHAPER'S GHOST*--SEEMS ALL *YOU* DID WAS MAKE ETERNITY AN *EASIER MEAL.*

...

No. I'd *know.*

I have a mind that stretches across *infinity*...

THE ULTIMATES. (CLASSIC.) AVENGERS FROM A DEAD REALITY.

...and I also have *backup.*

Hrrr. *Hulk* feel Richards' pain. *Nobody* listen to *smart people.*

Nobody listen to *Banner*, either. Or have dinner with Banner, even though Banner is *nice guy*. Hold *door* open, everything.

So... *Hulk* here, instead.

Hulk's dinner is now! Hulk is hungry--

Hulk want meat!

Good. Keep them busy.

Or kill them. That works, too.

And Hulk get what Hulk want! No stopping Hulk!

Hulk is alpha!

Hulk is strongest one there is!

YES.

WELL.

I'D DISPUTE THAT.

Not...

Not fair.

I'm sorry, did he just... just...

...the *Hulk*...?

Is anyone else thinking we should thrash this out with some rigorous debate?

Don't *joke*, Tony.

Who's joking?

Then you're talking about *surrender*--

--and this "A" doesn't stand for *France*!

YEAH?

WELL, *THIS* AMERICA--

--DOESN'T STAND FOR YOUR &%$#!

Unnnh!

Any time now, Hank...
Sorry, I...
I'm a little... confused...
Yeah. Me, too. I think... because...
...do you remember what happened? Before we got here?
Because... I'm getting flashes...
Oh, God. Oh... God...
We died.
Hank--
We died, Jan. We're, we're dead now...
Why would you make me remember that?
Why?
Hey! Easy!
Let's not fight each other here--
EXCELLENT ADVICE.

...

Who exactly *are* you people?

YOUR CREEPY BOSS DIDN'T *TELL* YOU?

WE'RE THE *PARAMEDICS FOR THE MULTIVERSE,* CAP.

WE'RE THE *ULTIMATES.*

You're the *what*--?

OOF!

I'm going to regret this.

YOU HEARD.

Stand down, team.

Let's hear them *out.*

Oh, thank God.

I don't *think* so.

I didn't bring you of *all* people here to make *friends*--

Well, frankly, I'm starting to question your ***authority*** here, Dr. Richards. See...***I'm*** starting to remember things, too. About you.

Did you do something to our ***minds***, Maker?

What minds?

When did ***my*** Captain America ever ***question authority?*** You're here to ***crack skulls,*** moron!

Well, never mind. I brought you ***into*** this world...

Steve!

...I can take you ***out.***

That's the ***thing,*** you see.

As long as this merged reality is still ***forming...***

You ***son of a--***

...I can still make ***adjustments.***

Who's ***next?***

HOW ABOUT YOU?

What...what *happened?*

What did you do?

DON'T FREAK OUT.

I'M *LIVING ELECTROMAGNETIC ENERGY.* SO I CAN *PROJECT* IT...AND *ABSORB* IT. *COMPLETELY.*

Absolute zero-- total absence of molecular motion. Brilliant.

If anything can stop Richards, it's that...

BUT THAT'S QUITE AN "IF."

You said a mouthful, Mr. Hulk-Smasher.

Not to suggest anything ***drastic***, but do we have a ***backup plan*** for when he--

--oh.

...

HE *BETRAYED* ME.

HE BETRAYED THE VERY *CONCEPT* OF ME.

WHAT HE *DID*--WITH *MY PROCESSES*, MY *TECHNOLOGY*--IS *AGAINST EVOLUTION.*

I CAN *FEEL* IT, A--A *SLOWING*, A *STAGNATION*, IN THE VERY PARTICLES THAT MAKE UP *REALITY*...

DR. HERBERT WYNDHAM. ALIAS: "THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY."

BECAUSE WE'RE BEING *DIGESTED* BY A *HIGHER* REALITY.

PRETTY MUCH JUST LIKE I *TOLD* YOU.

WHY *DO* ALL THIS, DR. WYNDHAM?

WE...WE THOUGHT BINDING ALL THE UNIVERSES *TOGETHER* WOULD MAKE ETERNITY *STRONGER*...

OF COURSE.

THE *BUNDLE OF STICKS*--STRONGER WHEN BOUND *TOGETHER* THAN ANY ARE *ALONE.*

WHERE FASCISM GETS ITS *NAME* FROM--THE LATIN, *FASCIS*, MEANING BUNDLE.

EXCEPT A BUNDLE OF STICKS IS ONLY STRONG WHEN *FIRMLY HELD.*

LET IT *BE*, AND IT'S JUST *DEAD WOOD*, ROTTING DOWN.

MOST PEOPLE TAKE THE WRONG *LESSON* FROM THAT.

STRENGTH IS NOT A BUNDLE OF *STICKS.*

STRENGTH IS A *TREE.*

WE'RE STRONGER WHEN WE CAN *GROW.*

CAN WE *REVERSE* THE PROCESS?

I... DON'T *KNOW*, DR. BRASHEAR.

THESE ARE *MY MACHINES*--BUT HE'S TAKEN EVERYTHING... SO MUCH *FURTHER*...

...I'M NOT SURE I CAN EVEN WORK THE *CONTROLS* ANYMORE.

Which is where *I* come in.

Cheers, everybody.

SHOULD YOU BE *DRINKING?*

God, yes. Not just for the *obvious* reasons, either.

Blood alcohol fuels the nanomachines in my *bloodstream*-- through which I control my armor with my *brain*.

Do we all see where I'm going?

DON'T--DON'T *SPIT* ON THE *EQUIPMENT*--

Direct connection, old boy.

My nanites are *designed* to find ways to talk to other systems. I *am* the interface now.
And yes, it's *complicated*-- too complicated for any *one* operator *alone*--

...but I'm *not* alone.

Am I?

NO. YOU'VE GOT A NETWORK OF *LIVING NEURAL ELECTRICITY* TO LINK US ALL *TOGETHER*--

--A *MULTIVERSAL EXPERT* TO KNOW WHERE EVERYTHING SHOULD *BE*--

--and a room full of *geniuses* to provide the *brainpower.*

AND SLOWLY...

IF THIS DOESN'T *WORK*... WELL, I'M GLAD WE STARTED *TALKING*, MR. STARK.

IT'S A PLEASURE TO BE WORKING WITH YOU.

Please... Dr. *Brashear*, was it?

...ETERNITY REMEMBERS.

BY THE ALL.

THEY *DID* IT.

The pleasure's all *mine*.

I always *wanted* to join the Ultimates.

THE HUM OF THE MACHINE RISES IN PITCH.

SLOWLY.

LIKE A VAST CREATURE IN PAIN. ETERNITY REMEMBERS.

NO... NO!

ETERNITY REMEMBERS WHAT IT SHOULD BE.

WHAT WAS IS HAPPENING?

ANSWER ME!

LOCAL SPACE-TIME-- *REVERTING*-- SUPERFLOW IS *RECONSTITUTING*--

ERROR!

ERROR!

HE'S LOOKING... *HEALTHIER.*

I THINK.

I'M NOT USED TO THIS...

ETERNITY IS FIGHTING THE *INFECTION*, EGO-PRIME. THIS IS OUR *CHANCE.*

THEIR DEFENSES--THE *BARRIERS* THEY'VE ERECTED--WILL BE WEAK. PERHAPS WEAK *ENOUGH*...

...FOR A *SUICIDE* RUN...

SO BE IT.

WE'RE GOING IN.

THE SUPERFLOW.

LOGOS!

YOUR CRIMES AGAINST *ETERNITY*--AGAINST *ME*--WILL GO UNPUNISHED *NO LONGER!*

ERROR!

ERROR!

CRIMES AGAINST REALITY

LOGOS.
THE LAW UNTO HIMSELF.

I AM THE PERSONIFICATION OF LAW IN THIS REALITY

YOU WOULD ACCUSE ME OF INJUSTICE? EVEN SUGGEST

ME? CALUMNY! DEFAMATION! THAT IS THE CRIME GALACTUS!

LOOK OUT--HE'S--

AAARHH!

THE HIGHEST CRIME

THE ULTIMATE CRIME!

AND YOU WILL SUFFER FOR IT!

AS I SLAUGHTERED THE CELESTIALS-- FOR THEIR PRIDE, THEIR DISRESPECT--

--SO WILL I EXECUTE YOU!

NNNHH--

LISTEN TO YOU. HISSING AND SPUTTERING. THE LAW.

A CANDLE FLAME AGAINST THE NIGHT...THE DARKNESS OUTSIDE THE CAVE...

...WHERE I REIGN SUPREME!

THE TIGER GOD. THE FIRST THING HUMANITY EVER FEARED.

HELLO, MY FRIENDS.

I HOPE I'M NOT INTRUDING.

T'CHALLA OF WAKANDA. CEREMONIAL TITLE: "BLACK PANTHER."

THE POWER OF THE *TIGER GOD* ALLOWED ME TO *ASCEND* TO THIS PLANE--A GUIDE AND *SHIELD*--

--BUT THE POWER I WIELD *NOW* IS MY *OWN*. ON *THIS* LEVEL... COMBAT IS *METAPHOR*.

AND I AM THE *KING*.

A *SYMBOLIC* ROLE, IN THESE TIMES. BUT I KNOW THE *POWER* OF SYMBOLS.

AND I KNOW HOW FRAGILE THE LAW CAN *BE*...

...IN THE HANDS OF *ONE MAN*.

FREE

THIS...THIS CANNOT *BE*... AND YET...

IF HUMANITY CAN *PREVAIL*... WHERE *PRIMAL ASPECTS* FAIL AND FALL...

...*ALL THINGS* ARE POSSIBLE.

OUTSIDE EVERYTHING.

I HEAR YOUR *PRAYER*, BROTHER-TO-ALL. FOR I *AM* POSSIBILITY.

I AM THE *QUEEN OF NEVERS*...

...AND ALL THAT *MIGHT BE*...I *AM*.

COULD ONE SINGLE CELESTIAL HAVE *SURVIVED* LOGOS' CULL OF HIS KIND? IF PROTECTED BY SOME *GREATER FORCE?*

COULD IT THEN BECOME A *SEED* OF *MANY?*

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. EACH *"WHAT IF"* MAY BECOME *WHAT IS.*

AND COULD I *FAN* THAT FLAME OF BECOMING? THIS *ONCE?* TO HELP SAVE *EVERYTHING?*

WHAT IF?

RISE, THEN, MY CELESTIALS.

MY *AVATARS OF THE POSSIBLE!*

RISE ANEW--

--THE FIFTH HOST!

THE *TRUE* CELESTIALS...!

WHERE ARE THEY COMING FROM?

FROM THE HEART OF THE *MYSTERY*--TO *FINISH* WHAT WE *BEGAN.*

THE DARK ONES ARE *DESTROYED*--

--LET THEIR CORRUPTION DIE WITH THEM!

FREE! FREE AGAIN!

"I'M *IMPRESSED,* ETERNITY."

YOUR LITTLE *ANTIBODIES* HAVE CURED THE *INFECTION* I GAVE YOU.

IT SEEMS I CANNOT *DIGEST* YOU, MY GRANDCHILD...

...SO I'LL JUST *DESTROY* YOU *ENTIRELY.*

READY?

I CAN FEEL YOU... OUT THERE... YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN OUT THERE

WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO--?

TO... TO ME

Do you...*feel* that...?

IT'S THE MULTIVERSE *AROUND* US. *ETERNITY*--GETTING *STRONGER.*

STRONG ENOUGH... TO...

Ah, fellows?

We've got company.

I SAW THEM.

THE SHAPER'S GHOST.
THE LOST ONE.
TELLER OF TRUTHS.

I SAW THE *OTHERS.*

ON THE *FAR SHORE*--WHERE *NOTHING* DIES--THEY *WAITED FOR THE CALL.*

AND NOW...

"...NOW THE CALL GOES FORTH!"

TO ME--

--MY ULTIMATES!

AND FROM ACROSS THE GULF OF DEATH...

...THE MULTIVERSES ASSEMBLE.

THE SECOND.
FIRST OF THE NEW BREED.
ORIGINATOR OF THE
OMEGA FORCE.

THE THIRD.
THE CONTINUATION.
CREATOR OF LIFEBRINGER
ONE, THE FIRST HERO.

THE FIFTH.
MAKER OF MAGIC.
WEAVER OF THE
ILLUSIONS OF CHANGE.

INFINITY, THE SEVENTH.
ETERNITY'S SISTER-SELF.
SHE IS HIM, HE IS HER.
THEY ARE THE TWO-IN-ONE.

THE SIXTH.
INVENTOR OF SCIENCE.
BUILDER OF THE JUNCTION
TO EVERYWHERE.

(THE FOURTH IS MISSING.
HE IS THE PILGRIM, THE TRUE
BELIEVER WHO JOURNEYS
INTO MYSTERY. ONE DAY,
HE WILL RETURN.)

THESE ARE THE ULTIMATE ULTIMATES...

...AND THEY DO MY WORK.

YOU...

YOU ARE DEAD! ALL OF YOU!

I WATCHED YOU DIE!

BUT HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OLDEST [illegible] THE FIRST SECRET OF MAGIC

NOTHING EVER [illegible]ALLY [illegible]

NO!

NO!

THE LONELIEST ONE IS BOUND IN THE RUNES HE FORGED

THE POETRY APPEALS TO ME

THEN LET US BEAR HIM TO THE NEXT PLACE.

AND HEAL HIM...IF WE CAN.

INFINITY-- WAIT--

HOW CAN THIS BE?

EVERYTHING LIVES, ETERNITY. YOU'LL UNDERSTAND, IN TIME.

BEYOND THE FAR SHORE... IS WHERE EVERYTHING BEGINS.

BE SEEING YOU.

"...SO WHAT HAPPENS NOW?"

NOW?

THE WAR IS *OVER.*

THE STORY IS *ENDED.*

ETERNITY IS *UNCHAINED* AND *UNCORRUPTED...*

ORDER. *CHAOS.*

LET US DISCUSS YOUR *CONDUCT...*

"...AND HIS *INNER WORKINGS* RESUME THEIR *FUNCTIONS.*

"THERE WILL BE THOSE WHO ARE *HAPPY* TO RETURN TO WHAT THEY WERE.

AAHH... FLOATING FREE AGAIN...

"BUT OTHERS WILL TRAVEL *ON...*FOREVER SEEKING *NEW HORIZONS.*

Hulk need bathroom.

Should've thought of ***that*** before we left ***reality,*** Bruce.

No ***bickering,*** people. Be vewy, vewy ***quiet.***

We're hunting ***Makers.***

"AND SO THE DANCE BETWEEN *CHANGE* AND *ILLUSION* WILL GO *ON.*"

AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR *YOU*, GALACTUS? NOW THAT THE MISSION'S *OVER*...COULD YOU STILL USE SOME *HERALDS?*

BECAUSE FRANKLY, WE COULD USE *YOU*...

I...AM *SORRY*, CAPTAIN MARVEL. THE *SHIELD* AROUND EARTH WORKS AS IT WAS *MEANT* TO.

EVEN MY POWER--THE POWER OF THE *LIFEBRINGER*--WILL NOT *BREACH* IT.

TOLD YOU.

CRYPTIC TO THE *END*, *HUH?*

IT'S STRANGE, THOUGH. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A *LONG* TIME...I FEEL LIKE THERE *IS* HOPE. LIKE SAVING THE WORLD--SAVING THE *FUTURE*--IS *POSSIBLE*.

AND WE DON'T HAVE TO GO BACK ON WHO WE *ARE* TO *DO* IT.

AND YET... THE POWER MAY *HEAL*. AND THERE *IS* ONE...IF THEY *COULD* HEAL...

...YES.

RETURN TO YOUR *POSTS*, ULTIMATES.

KNOW THAT *NOW*... THERE IS *HOPE*.

YES.

LET US BE OUR *HIGHEST SELVES*, CAPTAIN.

LET US BE WHO WE *ARE*...

...AND *NEVER* GO *BACK*.

AND WITH A WAVE OF MY [illegible],

...THEY ARE *GONE*.

INTO THEIR *OWN* FUTURES.

THEIR *TRIUMPHS* AND *TRAGEDIES*...

THEIR *MYSTERIES* AND *INTRIGUES*...

THEIR *LIVES* AND *LOVES*...

THEIR *LEGACIES*.

MAY THEY SHINE *BRIGHT*.

THE *SHAPER'S GHOST* SLEEPS IN MY HAND. INSIDE HIM, INFINITE *POTENTIAL* SPINS LIKE AN ORRERY OF JEWELS... AND I *REFLECT*.

THEY WERE *NEVER* JUST MY HERALDS. THEY GAVE MY EXISTENCE *NEW MEANING*--AND THEY *SAVED* ME, IN MY DARKEST HOUR.

I WILL NOT *FORGET*.

HERALDS COME AND GO--AND I HAVE HAD *MANY*...

...BUT MY FRIENDS ARE FOR ETERNITY.

THE END

When I originally pitched this series, Galactus was going to change back at the end.

It was baked into him turning gold in the first place--it was going to be a tragedy arc, a rise and fall. He would sacrifice what he had gained to save Eternity. (Readers saw what this probably would have looked like when Anti-Man sacrificed his life for Galactus back in #6.)

But a funny thing happened. The more I wrote Gold Galactus, the more I wanted to write him, and everything that sprang out of him. Purple Galactus was done--so done that he was a dialogue shorthand, so clichéd that my friends were using him as a joke--but this felt new. An ocean of possibility. So many new stories could come out of this. After a while, turning him Purple again felt like an act of vandalism, like putting a brick through my own window. And for what? The same old rise and fall story? Ugh, I just couldn't do it. It went against everything in me.

Which meant I needed a new ending. Something that hadn't been done, something that fit the themes and the cosmic scope of the book. Who could save Eternity? Who could he call on?

How big could this go?

How far out is the world that's coming? The mystery intrigues us.

And deep down, we don't want to go back.

Thanks to Mark Waid for that line, which I shamelessly snaffled from the famous FANTASTIC FOUR "Heaven" issue #511.

And while we're thanking people...

Thanks to the editorial team--Alanna Smith, Wilson Moss, Chris Robinson, Charles Beacham and, of course, Tom Brevoort. For asking me to write "Cosmic Avengers" in the first place, for helping me set the tone and style of the book and keeping it, for letting me have my head on the crazy stuff and giving me the occasional clip round the ear, for all of it.

Thanks to all-star letterer Joe Sabino and color artists Dan Brown and Matt Yackey, who kept the tone of the book constant over 22 issues, two volumes and all manner of weird cosmic scenes and voices, never failing to make the pages crackle with cosmic energy.

Thanks to Kenneth Rocafort, who started all this and gave this book a feel that nothing else on the shelves had. I'm looking forward to what comes next--I'm betting it's going to be amazing.

Thanks to Christian Ward, who took the cosmic combat up a notch. I still use his "Galactus punches Order" page as my banner at cons...although I might replace that with one of his many beautiful covers. You can find him over at BLACK BOLT--and please do!

Thanks to Djibril Morissette-Phan, who brought a much-appreciated warmth to the characters--I'd love to see more of his Adam and Monica. I believe he's doing *Glitterbomb* over at Image with Jim Zub--take a look.

Thanks to Aud Koch, one of the best new artistic finds I've ever had the pleasure to work with, who "got" what I was going for immediately and inspired me to take things further in that direction. Keep an eye out--what comes next is going to be the breakout, I reckon.

Thanks to Filipe Andrade, Mario Lorenzana and Scott Hanna for stepping in to help make this final issue a super-sized thirty-page feast of cosmic power!

And thanks, above all, to Travel Foreman. Travel's been the cosmic soul of this book since issue #1 of the new volume, and frankly, he's put up with a lot from me--all my usual tics and foibles, magnified--without a single complaint. He took the baton from Kenneth, and then took things further--much further than I ever considered possible, so much so that it still regularly takes my breath away. I'm still getting pages in the inbox now that are mind-blowing, and I'll be sorry when the last one comes through. (Even though I'll still get to dialogue it, hooray!) Thanks for everything, Travel.

This is the last issue of my ULTIMATES. #100 is a nice round number to end on. There's synchronicity in it, too--as you're reading this, it's Jack Kirby's 100th birthday month. That has personal resonance for me, and I hope I created enough brand-new ideas in this issue to make it a true celebration.

It's also my 40th birthday. (As I write this, it will be. As you read it, it was. It was the 12th.) This makes a good marker for that. A good capstone to a period of my life and my work.

What's next?

How far out is the world that's coming?

Let's find out. Time for something new.

Thanks for reading.

Al

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